

Laura and I wish you a joyful holiday season. May God bless you, and may God continue to bless America.

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

Message on the Observance of Kwanzaa 2007 *December 21, 2007*

I send greetings to those observing Kwanzaa.

Established in 1966, Kwanzaa is celebrated each year as an opportunity for African Americans to honor African traditions of family, community, and culture. During the seven days leading up to the New Year, millions of individuals reflect on the past and renew their commitment to the principles of Kwanzaa—unity, self determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith.

As family and friends gather to celebrate Kwanzaa, our citizens are reminded of the many African Americans who have contributed their talent and strength to this great Nation. I commend those observing this holiday for taking pride in your rich heritage. May the coming year be filled with the blessings of health and happiness.

Laura and I send our best wishes for a joyous Kwanzaa celebration.

GEORGE W. BUSH

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The President's Radio Address *December 22, 2007*

Good morning. Christmas is just a few days away. As Americans gather around the tree with family and friends, we remember the soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and Coast Guard men and women who will be spending this holiday far away from their homes and loved ones.

America is blessed to have men and women willing to step forward to defend our freedoms and keep us safe from our enemies. We are thankful for their courage and their dedication to duty. We pray for their safety, and we wish them a Merry Christmas, wherever they serve.

America is also blessed to have military families willing to sacrifice for our country. The husbands and wives, mothers and fa-

thers, sons and daughters of those in the military serve our country as well. For many of them, service means packing up their belongings and moving on short notice, or living in a different country for a time, or missing a family member as he or she serves overseas. And this Christmas, many will sit down for dinner thinking of their loved ones half a world away. These families deserve the thanks and the prayers of our whole Nation.

Some military families are helping loved ones recover from injuries sustained in combat. These families are a special source of hope and strength for our wounded warriors. Through their encouragement and devotion, they help heal the body and the

spirit, and they remind our wounded warriors that our Nation stands behind them.

Other military families have felt the pain of losing a loved one in battle. This Christmas, we hold them in our hearts. We lift them up in our prayers. And we are inspired by the example that many of these families have set by turning their grief into extraordinary acts of compassion and love.

One such inspiring example is the family of Army Specialist Michael Rodriguez of Knoxville, Tennessee. During his deployment in Iraq, Michael often wrote home to his family about the children he met on patrol. In April, Michael was killed by a suicide bomber. Now his family is honoring his memory by helping to collect school supplies for students in an Iraqi school for girls.

We are also grateful for Kirsten Yuhl-Torres of San Diego, California. In 2006, Kirsten lost her son, Sergeant Joseph Perry, in Iraq. To honor Joseph's memory, she started sending care packages and writing letters of support to other soldiers serving there. Kirsten says, "Joe was our only son, but now we have hundreds."

Our Nation is also inspired by Bob Lehmiller, whose son, Sergeant Mike Lehmiller, was killed in 2005 while serving in Afghanistan. To honor his son, Bob created Mike's Guardian Eagle Foundation. The foundation gives financial assistance to

military families who need extra help when their loved ones deploy or if they're wounded or killed on the field of battle.

All these families have already given so much to America, and yet they have found a way to give even more. We thank each of them. And we thank every one of our citizens who supports our troops with letters and donations or prayers.

At this time of year, we acknowledge that love and sacrifice can transform our world. The miracle of Christmas reminds us that God's grace is revealed in the humblest places. Two thousand years ago, the fullness of that grace was found in a tiny manger, and the life born that day changed our world forever. As Christmas approaches, Laura and I extend to all Americans our best wishes, and we hope every family is brought closer together during this season of reflection and rejoicing.

Thank you for listening, and Merry Christmas.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:30 a.m. on December 21 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 22. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 21, but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on Signing the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2008 *December 26, 2007*

Today, I signed into law H.R. 2764, legislation that will fund the Federal Government within the reasonable and responsible spending levels I proposed—without raising taxes and without the most objectionable policy changes considered by the Congress. This law provides a down payment for the resources our troops need, without arbitrary timelines for withdrawal. The Congress

should quickly take action next year to provide the remainder of the funding needed by our troops.

I am disappointed in the way the Congress compiled this legislation, including abandoning the goal I set early this year to reduce the number and cost of earmarks by half. Instead, the Congress dropped into the bill nearly 9,800 earmarks that total